The Scripture Doctrine of Predeſtination ſtated and explained.

TWO DISCOURSES

Preached before the

UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*,

At ST. *MARY*'s,

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TO THE

HONOURABLE

AND

Right Rev. Father in GOD,

RICHARD,

Lord Biſhop of

DURHAM.

MY LORD,

THE Honour, which your Lordſhip daily contributes to the order and ſtation, wherein you preſide, and the favour, which you have ſhewn to the author of theſe diſcourſes, have been my motives, ſince they were ordered to appear in publick, to aſk the

 additio-

additional recommendation of your Lordſhip's name to introduce them into the world. That amiable dignity, which diſtinguiſhes your Lordſhip's character, your example in every part of life, politeneſs of converſation, and ſtudious endeavours to promote the intereſts of true learning, muſt engage the eſteem of all, who wiſh well to the ſtate of literature, and our church; and thoſe, who are friends to either, will read your name with reſpect. Your ſerious attention to all ſubjects of religious importance induces you to give writings of that kind an impartial peruſal; your candor will incline you to excuſe all defects in this performance; your clear and deliberate judgment in the controverted ſubjects of religion may be ſuppoſed to render an author, who had experienced it's weight,

weight, naturally desirous of it's approbation; and the friendly marks of favour received from your Lordship give me the greatest pleasure in an opportunity of subscribing myself, with the utmost gratitude, respect, and deference,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

most obliged,

and most obedient

humble servant,

W. Parker.

ROM. VIII. 30.

Moreover whom He did predeſtinate, them He alſo called, and whom He called, them He alſo juſtified.

FROM a miſconſtruction of this, and miſapplication of ſome other paſſages of holy ſcripture, prepoſſeſſions have ariſen very injurious to chriſtianity; errors fatal to the ſecurity and peace of the chriſtian mind; errors equally deſtructive to the cauſe of virtue and religion, as to the real intereſts of thoſe, in whom they prevail: in a temporal view perhaps advantageous to ſome few deſigning men; but matter of unwarrantable preſumption to the credulouſly ſelf-ſufficient, or of anxious deſpondency, and, in the end, terrible deſpair to the melancholic pious chriſtian.

The misfortune is, that men are apt to lay hold of particular texts of ſcripture, as detached ſentences, unconnected with any context, and fix them in their minds, as diſtinct principles; without conſidering any reference they may bear

to the whole chain of the diſcourſe from whence they were taken, or any dependency their true meaning may have thereupon. And when the foundation hath thus been laid in error, imagination and fancy are ready to compleat the ſuperſtructure: whilſt the different complexion and conſtitution of the builder preſide over the work, and give a different turn or faſhion to the frame of the edifice. Thus is the word of truth itſelf by injurious perverſion made the unhappy baſis of falſhood; and thus the paſſage before us hath unfortunately ſuffered, having been miſapplied to ſtamp upon the minds of men wrong impreſſions of the divine oeconomy of love or juſtice in the government of the moral world.

For perſons of a melancholic caſt or temperament, ſuch as are apt to terrify themſelves with fruitleſs, nay worſe than fruitleſs, with pernicious ſpeculations about the danger and difficulties of their ſalvation, and in their imaginations dwell upon the rigor of divine ſeverity, have hence alarmed their fears with vain conceits of an abſolute predeſtination of ſome to eternal miſery: and warranted, as they think, by the authority of St. Paul, have frightened themſelves, and others into groundleſs unreaſonable apprehenſions about their future everlaſting ſtate. Whilſt other perſons of a more ſelf-favourable credu-

credulity, whoſe imaginations run high, whoſe ſpirits flow in a fuller vein, are apt to feed their fancies with ſoothing ſpeculations of capricious mercy, and undiſtinguiſhing goodneſs in the deity, and equally groundleſs notions of an abſolute election of ſome to eternal happineſs; always flattering themſelves, that they are in the fortunate number of thoſe, whom they ſtile the *elect*; for no other reaſon that can be aſſigned perhaps, but becauſe it is their fortune to be attached to one little ſect, or profeſſion of religion, without obeying either the moral, or ſocial precepts of any true religion at all. As if the Judge of all the earth would, in the great day of accounts, deal partially with his creatures, and neither condemn, nor reward them for their own perſonal behaviour, for their uſe of the talents, or abilities, which He hath given them; but for his own arbitrary preconceptions of love, or diſlike towards them. Foraſmuch as they thus make the eternal happineſs or miſery of rational agents an act of fortuitous determination, or (pardon the irreverence of the expreſſion, as well as the inconſiſtency of the terms) an act of original *prejudice* in the *all-juſt* Being, without any regard either to the private virtues or vices of men. An opinion totally ſubverſive of morality, as of all religion!

For if it can be ſuppoſed, that the almighty, irreſiſtible One hath abſolutely decreed beforehand, from all eternity, the neceſſary ſalvation of any man, this will take away the neceſſity of his own voluntary labours and purſuits after it; or elſe render them neceſſary and involuntary, and ſo he will be no longer a free-agent: or if again, on the other hand, God hath abſolutely decreed the eternal deſtruction of any man, this will diſcourage him from ſeeking, by his own virtue, after what he cannot attain, everlaſting happineſs. But far be it from the judge of all the earth to deal unjuſtly or capriciouſly by his creatures, to give them an appearance of free-agency, and choice in acting, without a power of chuſing: or to make any of them neceſſarily miſerable without their own fault, that be far from him!

It cannot therefore, I conceive, be a part unſerviceable to the cauſe of virtue and piety; and, as to ſatisfy the doubts or ſcruples, or uneaſineſs of any of our fellow-creatures, is at all times an office of humanity and chriſtian benevolence, it will not, I preſume, be thought a fruitleſs ſubject of inquiry;

Firſt,

Firſt, to examine the true deſign and meaning of the apoſtle in this paſſage;

Secondly, to make an obſervation or two upon St. Paul's expreſſions in general relative to this point from the titles, which he gives in general to his chriſtian converts: from whence we may ſee, how far the doctrine of predeſtination, whether as delivered in ſcripture, or ſtated in the articles of our church, has been frequently miſrepreſented and miſunderſtood among chriſtians; and then,

Thirdly, to conclude with a religious inference from the whole.

For it may be of uſe to thoſe, who are called upon to ſubſcribe articles, eſpecially to the younger part of this audience, to ſtate before them fairly from ſcripture, and the body of the articles themſelves, the true ſenſe maintained, in which our church means any one of it's articles ſhould be underſtood.

The heads laid down will furniſh us with matter ſufficient for the preſent, and a following diſcourſe; and they cannot be deemed fruitleſs or unſeaſonable topicks of inquiry at a time, when growing enthuſiaſm is apt to fill ſome men's heads with fantaſtick notions of their abſolute

ſolute predeſtination to life, in a fancied preeminence over their brethren, above any poſſibility of falling from grace or glory: in like manner to terrify others with equally groundleſs fears and apprehenſions of their predeſtination to eternal miſery, by a haſty excluſion of all thoſe from a capacity of obtaining grace, or inheriting glory, who do not profeſs themſelves of their own ſect, or party; or who do not, nay cannot pretend to feel, what they call their *ſenſible* impulſes. In the mean while ſcepticiſm takes advantage of their miſinterpretation of this, and ſome other paſſages of ſcripture, to form exceptions from thence againſt chriſtianity itſelf; from it's miſrepreſentation, as is objected, of the ſupream Being, in his oeconomy over moral agents.

For thus it hath been alledged with a ſneer by a late, noble, malignant ſceptick, that "the "God of Paul," as he calls him, [a] "creates "ſome rational beings with a determination to "ſave them, and others only to damn them." [b] "And the divines of our church," he ſays, "are obliged to ſwear that they adopt this doc-"trine, when they ſubſcribe the thirty nine ar-"ticles." The preſumption of ſome overheated imaginations, I fear, hath given but too much

a See Boling. Phil. Eſſ. Vol. 5. p. 149. 217. 8vo Ed.
b ib. Vol. 3. p. 174.

reaſon

reaſon for this cenſure upon a part of the ſacred writings miſrepreſented. Whereas neither Paul, nor any other inſpired writer advances any ſuch doctrine, nor does true chriſtianity give reaſon to embrace any ſuch opinion; but the direct contrary. And as to the article of our church, it is from a miſunderſtanding of the true ſenſe in which ſhe deſires it to be ſubſcribed, that the charge againſt it ariſes. There may be ſome difficulty or embarraſſment in the manner of expreſſion; but it's true intent will be aſcertained, agreeable to the point before us, by an examination of the whole article, eſpecially when compared with the whole body of the articles taken conſiſtently together. Let us then proceed, as was propoſed,

Firſt, to examine, and ſtate the true meaning and deſign of the apoſtle in the paſſage of ſcripture before us.

The inſpired writer, in this epiſtle, endeavours to ſet in a juſt light the righteouſneſs, or clear equity, as well as free grace and goodneſs of God, in the call of the Gentiles, ſubſequent to that of the Jews, into the goſpel-covenant: to convince his converts of the right which God had to caſt off his people, the Jews, when they rejected this covenant, and take to himſelf a church,

church, or peculiar people, out of the body of the believing Gentiles, and to ſatisfy and aſſure them of the divine ſtedfaſtneſs, as well as of the equity of the divine purpoſes in theſe determinations of his will. From hence he proceeds to exhort his converts to a faithful diſcharge of their ſeveral chriſtian duties, and to a patient perſeverance under the ſeveral perſecutions, which they muſt endure for the ſake of Chriſt and his goſpel.

The whole argument, from whence the text is taken, runs thus, [a] *For I reckon, that the ſufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which ſhall be revealed in us:* for, after ſome intermediate verſes to confirm the point, it follows, [b] *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are called according to his purpoſe.* As if he had ſaid; be not diſmayed at theſe ſufferings, which ye muſt endure for the ſake of Chriſt and his goſpel: for they are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall reward them: for we know, that all things, even theſe perſecutions ſhall be made to promote the ſpiritual good and welfare of thoſe that love God, to them who are called to be chriſtians, as *we* are, according to the purpoſes

a Rom. 8. 18. b ib. v. 28.

of

of his will in vouchſafing a revelation to mankind; and are admitted into covenant with him by the goſpel, and live according to the terms of that covenant, which is the only ſure proof of our loving God required by our Saviour. To which is immediately ſubjoined, *For whom he did foreknow, them alſo he did predeſtinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firſt-born among many brethren:* i. e. whom in his foreknowledge he had determined to call into his church, or ſociety of chriſtian people upon earth, he determined, that *they* ſhould be conformed to the likeneſs of his Son: but to a likeneſs in what? firſt in *ſufferings*; for the apoſtle is here directly ſpeaking of perſecutions; and likewiſe that, if they perſevered in this conformity of patience unto the end, their reward ſhould be a conformity to him in glory. [a] *We are*, ſaith he, in a preceding verſe, *joint-heirs with Chriſt, if ſo be that we ſuffer with him, that we may be alſo glorified together.* Here is a moral qualification required, previous to our glorification, namely patient ſuffering, if it pleaſe God ſo to try us. *Moreover whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called:* i. e. whom he had foreordained to be thus his children, and to be thus conformed in ſufferings to

a v. 17.

the image of his ſon, he determined to call, or, according to a figure of ſpeech, which puts the paſt for that which is certainly future, he *called*; i. e. he called them by the preaching of the goſpel into his church, or kingdom of grace upon earth; *and whom he called, them he alſo juſtified*, or put into a ſtate of juſtification and pardon upon true repentance; *and whom he juſtified, them he alſo glorified*, or put into a ſtate of glorious light here, and a capacity of obtaining future glory and honour and immortality in the life to come. But then the conditions of attainment were propoſed, that they continued to love God, and perſevered in acting conformably to the dictates of his will. From hence the apoſtle's reflection is, [a] *what ſhall we then ſay to theſe things?* The inference is very plain and obvious under a ſtate of perſecution; [b] *if God be for us, who can be againſt us?* If God hath been thus gracious to us in calling us to be chriſtians, and hath deſigned ſuch great things for us, and hath given us ſuch an earneſt of his favour, having ſent his Son to redeem us, and having admitted us into formal covenant with himſelf through Chriſt, why ſhould we dread the malice, or hatred, or perſecutions of men? [c] For *He that ſpared not his own ſon, but delivered him up*

a v. 31. b ib. c v. 32.

for

for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things for our ſupport and happineſs? Let us perſevere in virtue and faithful ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake, whenever called to it; for man cannot obſtruct our happineſs, unleſs we deſert ourſelves. Then follows that holy triumph of perſeverance, to which nothing but chriſtianity is equal, to which nothing is to be compared in all the triumphs of heathen philoſophy, or ſtrength of heathen eloquence; [a] *who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword? In all theſe things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am perſuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor heigbt, nor depth, nor any other creature ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.*

He ſpeaks here of a firm perſuaſion of mind: the words denote a ſtrong degree of moral preſumption, that the preſent ſincere among them *would* not finally fall: but were not intended to convey any idea of abſolute certainty, that they *could* not. And in reality the predeſtination, or election, here intended by the apoſtle, was the

[a] v. 35, 37, 38, 39.

free and gracious purpoſe of God to ſelect, and confirm to himſelf a church upon earth, to ſeparate to himſelf out of the whole race of mankind a peculiar people and ſociety upon earth, diſtinguiſhed by particular privileges of light and knowledge, that in ſome part of the earth at leaſt the worſhip of the true God might be eſtabliſhed. And their juſtification in the preſent ſtate, was the right, which theſe enlightened perſons, or true believers, Gentile, as well as Jewiſh converts had to the bleſſings and privileges of the goſpel kingdom, or kingdom of grace upon earth: not in ſuch a manner as to have the poſſeſſion of the kingdom of glory abſolutely ſecured to them, without any future labour, or endeavours of their own, or indeed without any future free-moral-agency left them: no: it was only a merciful aſſurance of pardon upon ſincere repentance, and of aid ſufficient to conduct them to that kingdom of glory, provided they made a right uſe of the divine light afforded them under the diſpenſations of grace here.

That this was the ſole meaning of the apoſtle in theſe phraſes, will appear from the whole tenor of this, and his other epiſtles: from the frequent exhortations, which he gives to theſe elect, wherein is implied, that they might fall from

from grace, and forfeit thoſe privileges, to which they had been admitted at their baptiſm. He every where indeed ſuppoſes, that God *may* have, and *hath* admitted ſome of his creatures into fuller degrees and privileges of light and knowledge than others. Thus he hath called ſome, for inſtance all chriſtians in general, into a covenant of ſalvation; who are therefore ſtiled, in the ſtrong, and expreſſive language of ſcripture, the *ſaved*, the *elect*, the *predeſtinated to life*, and ſo on. But then the very nature of a covenant ſuppoſes ſomething afterwards to be performed on *their* part, who are thus called, without which they ſhall loſe the privileges ſtipulated on God's part. From hence then give me leave to proceed,

Secondly, to make an obſervation or two upon St. Paul's expreſſions in general relating to this point, and the titles he gives to true believers; which may tend to clear the matter before us. For from thence we may ſee, how far the doctrine of predeſtination, whether as delivered in ſcripture, or ſtated in the articles of our church, has been frequently miſrepreſented, or miſunderſtood among chriſtians. A ſubject more eſpecially ſeaſonable in this age, when on the one hand, as I have obſerved, a ſett of men have lately endeavoured to delude their chriſtian brethren

thren with falſe notions of an abſolutely ſecure inheritance to the crown of life, and draw ſects after them by vain perſuaſions, that through a firm adherence to *their* flock, they ſhall be raiſed into ſuch a ſtate, as not to have it in their power for the future, either to fall from grace, or forfeit happineſs; ſecluding at the ſame time all others from any hopes of ſalvation: reviving thereby and awakening ſome obſcure antiquated errors, which had before lain dormant in darkneſs.

On the other hand a late noble patron of infidelity has objected to St. Paul's repreſentation of the ſupreme Being, or, as he terms him, [a] "the God of Paul, that he elects ſome of his "creatures to ſalvation, and predeſtinates others "to damnation, even in the womb of their mo-"thers." From whence it is plain, that the noble writer either did not, or would not underſtand a word of St. Paul's meaning in any of thoſe paſſages, or choſe not to ſtate them aright to his readers; he objects to a ſhadow raiſed by himſelf, and by ſome inconſiderate, enthuſiaſtick writers, equal enemies, in this reſpect, to the religion, to which they meant to be friends. This renders it expedient to clear St. Paul's

a Bolingb. Phil. Eſſ. Vol. 5. p. 217. 8vo Ed.

meaning

meaning in theſe paſſages by their context, or the current thread of his argumentation; whereby his whole doctrine will be immediately juſtified. For St. Paul ſhould be treated like other ancient, rational writers, not interpreted by ſingle ſentences, or ſingle ſeparate texts, ſtript of all connexion, as hath been too frequently the caſe; but by the ſcope of argument, and plain deſign of the writer, purſued through the whole epiſtle. Interpret him, as you would the letter of a ſenſible friend, not by a ſingle, detached phraſe, or ſentence, but by the whole conſidered together.

True believers are indeed frequently ſtiled by St. Paul the *elect*, the *predeſtinated* to life. Which were expreſſions intended to denote to them, *not*, that they were now put into a ſtate from which they could not fall, that the grace of God, which was given them, was irreſiſtible, and that they were abſolutely ſecured of eternal happineſs: but were intended to denote only goſpel-privileges, or external advantages of the kingdom of grace in this world, of which, as free-agents, they might, or might not make a right application as they pleaſed: expreſſions intended to denote to them, that they were now in their chriſtian capacity admitted into peculiar favours by the God of grace, and in this ſenſe indeed

indeed become his elect people, being diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of mankind by extraordiry means of light and knowledge; that they were put into a way of ſalvation attainable by a proper uſe of theſe means; that they were before ordained of God in the purpoſes of his will to be *called*, or invited into theſe privileges of light and knowledge.

Now that this is the true, and whole ſenſe of predeſtination, as delivered in ſcripture by St. Paul, will appear from hence, that theſe *elect*, theſe *predeſtinated* perſons, according to the judgment of the ſame apoſtle, ſtood in need of exhortation, of admonition, of encouragement, and of threatning. Which implies them ſtill to be left free-moral agents, capable of ſinning, or acting righteouſly; of incurring the execution of theſe threats, or obtaining the promiſes.

For thus the ſame apoſtle, who indites his epiſtle to the Romans in general as to perſons *beloved of God*, *called to be ſaints*, and ſpeaks of them as *juſtified*, *elected*, and *having peace with God*, yet ſoon after exhorts theſe very *elect* to *walk in newneſs of life*, to *preſent their bodies a living ſacrifice*, *holy*, *acceptable unto God*; to *awake out of ſleep*; which intimates, that ſome of them might yet ſlumber in vice and error. He admoniſhes them to caſt off the works of darkneſs;

darkneſs; which implies that ſome of them were yet cloathed therewith, as with garments of iniquity. And leſt the willingneſs of the ſpirit ſhould give way to the weakneſs of the fleſh, under the ſeverity of chriſtian ſufferings, he encourages their perſeverance under *theſe light afflictions, which endure but for a moment*, by the proſpect of *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*; which ſhews, that encouragement was not needleſs: he threatens them, that notwithſtanding their election, and all their goſpel privileges, yet if they *lived* after *the fleſh*, if they lived in ſubjection to their carnal appetites, they ſhould periſh.

To the chriſtians in general, that were at Corinth, he writeth, as to them that were *ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus, called to be ſaints, called of God unto the fellowſhip of his ſon.* Yet he tells them ſoon after, *I brethren could not ſpeak unto you, as to ſpiritual, but as unto carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, ſtrife, diviſion, are ye not carnal?* This ſanctification therefore could not mean abſolute, but relative ſanctity; great in compariſon with that of other men: not a neceſſary, impelled ſanctity of morals, but a profeſſion of ſanctity; which might in charity indeed ſuppoſe good morals, but in ſome inſtances did not prevail.

To the Epheſians he writes, that God had [a] *choſen* them in Chriſt *before the foundation of the world*, having *predeſtinated* them *unto the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt to himſelf, according to the good pleaſure of his will*; that they had *obtained redemption through his blood, the forgiveneſs of ſins: in whom alſo they had obtained an inheritance, being predeſtinated according to the purpoſe of him, who worketh all things after the counſel of his own will, that they might be to the praiſe of his glory, who firſt truſted in Chriſt.* What expreſſions of predeſtination can be ſtronger than theſe? Yet the ſame apoſtle exhorts them, who were thus *choſen* and *predeſtinated, to put on the whole armour of God, that they might be able to withſtand in the evil day* of trial, and, *having done all, to ſtand.* Which exhortation ſuppoſes, that they had ſtill enemies to encounter, by whom they *might* be overcome. He admoniſhes them therefore *not to be deceived by vain words, not to walk in the vanity of their minds,* preſuming upon their chriſtian privileges, *to have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs.* Such admonitions then were not thought unneceſſary by the apoſtle for this *choſen*, this *predeſtinated* people, leſt they ſhould yield in the day of probation, leſt their morals ſhould be corrupted by

a Epheſ. 1. 4 &c.

evil

evil communications. Which is a plain proof, that their election, or predeſtination extended only to certain goſpel-privileges in this life, but gave them no title to ſure admiſſion into life eternal, without a ſtedfaſt, and ſincere obedience to the precepts of the goſpel.

They were taken in ſhort into an holy ſociety, or fellowſhip; into a ſocial profeſſion of ſanctity, wherein light and ſalvation were promiſed to ſincere faith and obedience: whilſt other Gentiles were left doubtful and uncertain about a future ſtate; ignorant whether God would admit of any attonement for ſin; whether an imperfect obedience would be accepted by him. By an heightened figure of ſpeech therefore, which puts the end for the means, the former were addreſſed under the denomination of the *ſanctified*, the *ſaved*, the *juſtified* &c: as having put on a profeſſion of ſanctity, as having the means of juſtification and ſalvation in their hands.

And no doubt, great matter of ſatisfaction muſt it have been to the firſt ſincere chriſtian converts, to reflect on the doubts and uncertainties from which they were delivered, under which they had lived in their heathen ſtate: full of gratitude muſt have been the reflection, that they were choſen out of mankind to enjoy theſe

peculiar privileges; that they had not only a gracious proſpect of ſalvation, but the terms of it alſo clearly propoſed to them. A great deliverance it muſt have been eſteemed by them, when compared with the ſtate of other Gentiles, to be put into a condition of pardon, into a capacity of being fully and for ever happy. The apoſtle therefore charitably ſuppoſing them to walk, and in order to excite them through gratitude the more ſtedfaſtly to walk, according to theſe privileges of their vocation, thinks he cannot too highly magnify their ſituation and character, as chriſtians, by ſtiling them *elect*, *beloved of God*, *called to be ſaints in Chriſt*, *juſtified*, *predeſtinated to life*, and ſo on. And the great privileges to which they were admitted, and the end deſigned by him in theſe addreſſes, namely to encourage them againſt perſecutions, ſufficiently juſtify the ſtrong expreſſions of the apoſtle.

But then leſt they ſhould grow preſumptuous upon theſe bleſſings, and ſpiritually proud of theſe divine favours, we find religious inferences, and exhortations to holineſs every where drawn from their enjoyment of theſe privileges. The apoſtles indeed, to raiſe in their converts a juſt ſenſe of the abundant riches of divine grace under the goſpel diſpenſation, opened to them

all

all the fountains of his favour; the ſurprizing method in which their redemption had been accompliſhed and conveyed to them; the diſmal circumſtances of darkneſs they had before been under, in their heathen ſtate; the glory and honour to which they were advanced by their new adoption into the chriſtian covenant: that they were now, according to the expreſſive language of inſpiration, the temple or church of the living God, a ſacred family adopted by the moſt high, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt. But then we find theſe glorious ſcenes of life diſplayed before them in order to excite and animate an holy gratitude; we find them warmly urged and intreated thereby not to receive this *grace of God in vain*; which ſhews that it *might* have been received in vain; but to improve it into ſolid principles of virtue, into lively fruits of righteouſneſs: we find frequent cautions given them againſt falling from their high ſtation by too indulgent a compliance with their carnal appetites; which proves, that the apoſtle thought them not incapable of falling: we find the prize of life ſet before them, for their encouragement in the race of virtue, which ſhews that encouragement was not needleſs to animate their perſeverance in that race: we find the alarming terrors of a future judgment, all the horrors

horrors and torments of a dreadful eternity, to fright them from the paths of vice; which proves the ſanction of threatning not to have been unneceſſary to deter them from evil. We find them therefore ſtill remaining moral agents, ſtill obnoxious to fall, though ſtanding upon the ground of ſuch ſpiritual graces. [a]

a Thus again St. Paul prayeth to God for his converts the Corinthians, *that they do no evil.* 2 Cor. 13. 7. which ſuppoſeth, that in ſome degree they might be yet prone to evil. He exhorts them to *examine themſelves whether they be in the faith*: ib. v. 5. which implies, that they might yet err from their right holy faith. He ſuppoſeth, that they might yet become *reprobates*, or perſons diſapproved of God for their conduct. *Know ye not your own ſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you, except ye be reprobates.* ib. Here is no language of an impeccable ſtate of chriſtian perfection, incapable of erring. Nor would their bare poſſeſſion of goſpel-privileges entitle them to neceſſary acceptance with God: for in another epiſtle he ſaith, *But of thoſe who ſeemed to be ſomewhat, whatſoever they were, it maketh no matter to me, God accepteth no man's perſon.* Gal. 2. 6. *He withſtood Peter to the face* in one inſtance, *becauſe he was to be blamed*; for he and his aſſociates in that inſtance *walked not uprightly according to the truth of the goſpel.* v. 11—14. To his Galatian converts he writeth, *have ye ſuffered ſo many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.* Gal. 3. 4. *Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye ſhould not obey the truth?* Gal. 5. 7. *This I ſay then, walk in the ſpirit, and ye ſhall not fulfill the luſts of the fleſh.* v. 16. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap.* Gal. 6. 7. To the firſt Epheſian chriſtians he ſaith, *I beſeech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called.* Eph. 4. 1. *See that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe.* Eph. 5. 15. *Be ye not unwiſe.* v. 17.

Here

Here then is no aſſignation of men from the foundation of the world, or from their mother's womb to eternal miſery; no abſolute election of any to eternal happineſs, without a regular conformity of morals, as well as faith, to the divine will. [a]

In ſhort, as I cannot preſume, that your patience ſhould permit me at preſent to purſue my remarks any further upon this head; as I have endeavoured to lay before you the doctrine of an apoſtle, and propoſe in my following diſcourſe to ſhew the conſiſtency of our own church in her ſentiments with thoſe of the ſame apoſtle; I ſhall conclude at this time with this one caution to the leſs guarded, if any can be lightly guarded in this place, that you ſuffer not yourſelves to be deluded by any falſe hopes of juſtification or ſalvation without virtue, or terrified by falſe fears of abſolute reprobation without ſpontaneous vice. For in oppoſition to any groundleſs ſelf-flattery, or deſpondent apprehen-

a Here therefore I will readily join hands with our author in his aſſertion, though not altogether in his own meaning; when he ſays of this doctrine of abſolute predeſtination to happineſs, or miſery: "Whether St. Paul intended to teach it, is made to "ſome perſons, but I confeſs not to myſelf, doubtful; that Chriſt "did not teach it, is certain." For it is equally certain, and without doubt, that St. Paul did not teach it. Bolingb. Phil. Eſſ. Vol. 3. p. 174. 8vo Ed.

ſions

ſions of this kind, we have, as it were in one ſhort line, the aſſurance of the divine word, which cannot err, or contradict itſelf, that *in every nation*, according to the light, which every man therein enjoys, and the opportunities of improvement given him, *whoſoever feareth God, and worketh righteouſneſs, he*, and indeed he only, *is accepted with him.*

SERMON II.

ROM. VIII. 30.

Moreover, whom He did predeſtinate, them He alſo called, and whom He called, them He alſo juſtified.

MEN of weak heads, or wicked deſigning minds have made an evil uſe of this text. They have rendered it ſubſervient to very miſchievous purpoſes, and the ſupport of very abominable notions, of ſentiments entirely derogatory from God's honour, prejudicial to chriſtian religion, foreign to the apoſtle's intention, inconſiſtent with free-agency, contrary to the cauſe of virtue, abſurd upon every principle of ſound reaſon.

It hath been in particular notoriouſly applied to the ſervice of enthuſiaſm, as the miſconſtruction of it hath often been the product of enthuſiaſm: it hath been made ſerviceable to the promotion of little preſumptuous ſects, or the private intereſts of vain leaders of ſects. While the common enemy of chriſtianity hath reaped the

advantage; founding objections againſt the chriſtian cauſe upon the abſurdity of it's ſuppoſed doctrines, and it's miſrepreſentations of the ſupream Being in thoſe imaginary doctrines; which have been cheriſhed only in the brains of deluded enthuſiaſts, or forged by the invention of perverſe ſcepticks; not exiſting at all in the chriſtian charter, which are the books of holy writ.

It will be more apparent ſtill, how groſſly this, and ſome other texts of the ſame epiſtle have been miſrepreſented, if we only conſider yet a little more fully the ſcope, deſign, and connexion of the apoſtle's argumentation therein. The occaſion of the argument was this. The Jews were highly offended at one part of chriſtian doctrine, that the Gentiles were now invited into covenant with God, on a ground upon which *they* formerly had ſtood *alone*; that the Jewiſh nation, in their political capacity, for their obdurate infidelity, and hardened wickedneſs, were now to be excluded; that their conſtitution was ſoon to be diſſolved, and their main body caſt out of God's temporal, and viſible kingdom; that God had choſen to himſelf another peculiar people made up of true believers in his ſon the true Meſſiah, conſiſting of the remnant of devout Jews that embraced the goſpel

goſpel, and the greater body of converted Gentiles; that this church, or ſociety of men, was now to become the peculiar object of divine protection, favoured with ſingular privileges of divine light, knowledge and aſſiſtance. The apoſtle therefore endeavours to ſatisfy the Jewiſh nation, and the Jewiſh converts to Chriſtianity, of the equity of the divine diſpenſations in this inſtance of oeconomy; to ſhew them, that God had an inconteſtible right to chuſe the Gentiles and reject the Jews; to favour the one with any earthly privileges, to exclude the other from any extraordinary favour; that in reſpect of any promiſes made to Abraham, he was free to confer them upon any branch of Abraham's ſeed by Iſaac, and not obliged to confine them merely to Jacob; that the Iſraelites might forfeit, and be deprived of thoſe privileges, which they enjoyed in this world, only as being the church of God, and ſo long as they continued to be his people; that this inherent right of rejecting the main body of the Iſraelites, and of chuſing others out of every nation under heaven, was no more than had been affirmed in the writings of their own lawgiver, Moſes; and was agreeable to the predictions of ſeveral of their prophets: for that temporary favours, or temporary protections granted to nations are

matters of mere arbitrary diſpoſal; that ſuch ſocieties have no claim of merit to ſuch favours; that God may grant them to what nations, and for what time he pleaſeth, and may revoke them, as he pleaſeth; that the creature hath no right to call the creator to account for any diſcretionary diſpoſals of favour; much leſs have creatures any right to complain, if they have forfeited the protection by their own trangreſſions. For God had as good a right to reject the Jews for their obſtinate unbelief in his ſon, when they had hardened their hearts againſt the true Meſſiah, as he had to deſtroy Pharaoh and his hoſt, when they had hardened themſelves in idolatry againſt Moſes, and againſt himſelf, the true God of Iſrael, notwithſtanding his ſeveral diſplays of divine power before them. And when Pharaoh's heart was thus hardened by his own wickedneſs, God had a right no doubt, if he thought fit, to raiſe him up higher for this reaſon, that he might make his juſtice and his power ſeen more conſpicuouſly in his fall. For wicked men may by their impenitence make themſelves ſubſervient to divine purpoſes by the diſplay of juſtice in puniſhment. And God is ſaid only, in the language of ſcripture, to harden them, whom he permits, after all gracious means have been uſed for their recovery, to harden

harden themſelves: i. e. he hath given them ſuch diſplays of his power, juſtice, forbearance, and goodneſs, that, if they are not reclaimed thereby, they muſt appear to be more hardened, or to have hearts harder than they had before: this is the ſole ſenſe of his hardening them.

But ſtill national favours are arbitrary diſpoſals: and God may make one nation of his creatures at one time for honour, i. e. relative honour, and another for relative diſhonour in the eyes of mankind, without accounting to them for his conduct; or without *viſible* purpoſes diſplayed, though he may have purpoſes treaſured up in the ſtores of infinite wiſdom.

Thus he deſtined Jacob, and his poſterity to greater privileges than Eſau, and his offspring, before their children, or they themſelves were yet born. For ſo, ſaith St. Paul, it is recorded by your own lawgiver, Moſes, for whoſe rites you Jews are ſo ſtrenuous, [a] *that the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpoſe of God according to election* into bleſſings and privileges upon earth *might ſtand, not of works*, or any claim of man's merit, but of the free favour *of him that calleth, it was ſaid, the elder ſhall ſerve the younger*; the poſterity of the younger ſhall be ſuperior to, and

a Rom. 9. 11, 12, 13. Gen. 25. 23.

a nation

a nation much more proſperous and happy than, that of the elder. *As it is written Jacob have I loved, but Eſau have I hated:* that is, I have preferred Jacob, and have beſtowed peculiar favours and bleſſings upon his poſterity: but Eſau and his poſterity have I made ſubordinate in my diſpoſals, and have not been ſo liberal in my donations to them.

Now ſubordination of ſtates may be very neceſſary ſometimes for the good of the whole ſyſtem, as the ſubordination of individuals is for the good of ſocieties. The ſeaſonable cultivation and improvement of the whole earth by turns may be promoted thereby. Arts and ſciences have been certainly propagated thereby. For ſome nations are only to be improved by the diſcipline of ſuperiors. Conqueſts, and captivities, as well as tranſmigrations of colonies have tranſmitted arts, and communications of the fruits of induſtry among men. Some rude unpoliſhed nations have been tutored into civil habits only by ſuch rough, unſavoury diſcipline. And though the law of arms may not always in every inſtance have been the moſt juſtifiable, in it's original motives, or in it's final deciſions, or in the hearts of the principal agents, yet by that all-contriving wiſdom, which worketh good out of evil, out of the evil paſſions, and diſſentions

of men, we ſee it hath been often made the inſtrumental means of diſſeminating many uſeful improvements. For ſciences have often traveled with conqueſts. And thus we ſee temporary proſperity fluctuating from one nation to another, all in ſubſerviency to the purpoſes of the divine will in the government of man, to the will of him, who ſuffereth the tide and the waves to roar, and yet at length curbeth their power, and ſetteth them their bounds, which they ſhall not paſs; to the will of him, to whom all his works, and means, and meaſures of oeconomy are known from the beginning of the world.

But you will aſk perhaps, how does it appear, that the purpoſe of God in the election of Jacob, and reprobation of Eſau related to their poſterity in a national capacity, rather than to the individual men themſelves? It appears from the very words of the hiſtory, where this election, here alluded to by the apoſtle, is recorded, from whence he quotes this paſſage, *the elder ſhall ſerve the younger*. For thus we read; Gen. 25, 33. *and the Lord ſaid unto her*, i. e. unto Rebecca, *two* NATIONS *are in thy womb, and two manner of* PEOPLE *ſhall be ſeparated from thy bowels; and the one* PEOPLE *ſhall be ſtronger than the other* PEOPLE, *and the elder ſhall ſerve the younger.*

This

This election we ſee was *national*; relative to national preeminence. Other paſſages of ſcripture will not allow us to ſay, that the Iſraelites were herein every man of them elected to eternal life; becauſe there were afterwards very wicked men among the Iſraelites, who were remarkable objects of God's diſpleaſure. Nor does ſervitude, or the phraſe to *ſerve*, any where in ſcripture ſignify *damnation*, or being eternally *condemned*; nor conſequently does it's oppoſite ſignify *eternal life*, or abſolute election to eternal happineſs. The text then here quoted was never intended to denote final retribution to the particular perſons literally nominated; but general diſpenſations of temporal or ſpiritual favours to nations deſcended from them. When it ſays therefore, *Jacob have I loved, but Eſau have I hated*, it is not meant, I have predeſtinated the one to eternal happineſs, and the other to eternal miſery, without any perſonal merit or demerit of their own, as ſome have miſunderſtood the paſſage. No: no ſuch thing is meant. But it is only a ſtrong expreſſion of eaſtern language denoting the admiſſion of the one, with his whole race, to certain temporal, and even ſpiritual advantages upon earth, to which the poſterity of the other was *not* admitted. It has no reference at all to the final eternal ſtate of

theſe

theſe men, or their poſterity, or God's dealing with them as individuals in the great day of impartial retribution. It is no more than this, I have placed the one, and his deſcendants, behind the other, in my diſpoſal of temporal eſteem, or kindneſs.

This might appear further, if further proof were needful, from the prophet Malachi, for when it is there ſaid, [a] *I loved Jacob, and hated Eſau*, we ſee immediately explained, what is meant by this *hatred:* it is immediately referred to temporal poſſeſſions: for the words immediately following, as the effect or conſequence of this hatred, relate only to temporal demeans. [b] *I laid his mountains, and his heritage waſte for the dragons of the wilderneſs.* God cannot naturally in a ſtrict ſenſe *hate* any of his creatures, or in any other ſenſe than as by their obſtinate wickedneſs they become objects of his juſtice. But the *hatred* here ſpoken of was only a comparative diſtribution: i. e. the temporal regard ſhewn to Eſau was leſs than that ſhewn to Jacob, beſide ſome temporal puniſhment, inflicted upon Eſau, and his poſterity, for their ſubſequent courſe of iniquity. And therefore by way of analogy to the influence of human paſſions, or the ſprings and motives of human

a Mal. 1. 2, 3. b ib.

actions, where it is hatred, or hateful anger, that is uſually the cauſe of diſinheriting a ſon, this leſs degree of temporal regard, or diſinheriting of Eſau, is in ſtrong eaſtern language comparatively ſtiled *hatred.*

The ſame term of *hating* is uſed in the very ſame ſenſe by our Saviour in St. Luke's goſpel, where it is ſaid, [a] *If any man come to me, and* HATE *not his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and ſiſters, yea and his own life alſo, he cannot be my diſciple.* All that is meant is no more than this, if any man poſtpone not the authority and intereſts of his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and ſiſters, yea and ſecurity of his own life alſo, when interfering with me, and my goſpel, he cannot be my diſciple. It cannot be underſtood to mean, that he ſhould *literally hate* his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and ſiſters; to be entirely negligent of whoſe ſupport and intereſt, St. Paul ſaith, would render him *worſe than an infidel*; it cannot mean this therefore, any more than it can literally mean, that he ſhould *hate* his own life, which is the gift of God, for which he ought to be thankful, and which his very nature obliges him to love. Such kind of hatred

a Luke 14. 26.

there-

therefore cannot be a neceſſary qualification for a good chriſtian, or a good diſciple of the goſpel, which is the gift of the God of love, as would diſqualify a man for being a good moral heathen: for the goſpel is a law of amity: it is not only a law of true ſelf-love; but of love to all men, eſpecially to our neareſt relations: nay the chriſtian hath an expreſs commandment enjoining him to *honour* his father and his mother; which honour is naturally founded in love. But our Saviour's meaning is, that the authority of man, how nearly ſoever related to us, ſhould not, when we come to years of diſcretion, be ſuffered to ſtand in competition with the plain commands of God, of Chriſt, and his goſpel. Nay that the intereſts of our own lives ſhould not be permitted to obſtruct thoſe of the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind.

To return then to the apoſtle's argument: he that called Abraham, and annext the ſpecial bleſſing only to a part of his family, ſaying, [a] *in Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be called*, the ſame God had a right to call the Gentiles afterwards into the privileges of the goſpel covenant, and to reject the Jews from being any longer his people under a peculiar protection, when by their obduracy in unbelief, they became altogether unwor-

a Gen. 21. 12.

thy of his favours. For thus ſaith he to Moſes, [a] *I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy*; I will confer my favours and marks of temporal kindneſs, on whom I will confer them; *and I will have compaſſion* on thoſe nations, *on whom I will have compaſſion*; and will grant them my protection. Firſt on the Iſraelites in the ſight of Pharaoh, and afterwards on the Gentiles in the ſight of the Jewiſh nation. For that by the phraſe of *having mercy*, extraordinary temporal privileges conferred on a people are expreſſed, appears from other paſſages of ſcripture. Thus the call of the Gentiles into the church through faith is by the ſame apoſtle expreſſed under the terms of [b] *obtaining mercy*; and likewiſe by St. Peter, where it is ſaid of the Gentile converts, [c] *which in time paſt were not a people; but are now the people of God; which had not* OBTAINED MERCY, *but now have* OBTAINED MERCY: i. e. are now called to the external privileges of his church and people. Thus then *hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy*, or is bountiful in his outward diſpenſations of favour, power, protection, dominion and grandeur to one people above another; and he may afford greater inward means of grace to one, than to another;

a Exod. 33. 19. Rom. 9. 15. b Rom. 11. 30.
c 1 Pet. 2. 10.

but

but ſtill is equitably and ſufficiently gracious unto all.

The apoſtle then here ſpeaks of men *nationally*, not *perſonally*, and in reference to their *temporal*, not their *eternal* ſtate. Though their temporal privileges might, if rightly applied, greatly advance the eternal intereſts of individuals in thoſe ſtates: if miſapplied, will only enhance their puniſhment. Chriſtians are invited to eternal life, ſeparated and predeſtinated to this call and invitation; and if they will but accept of the grace, and faithfully purſue the means, they need not fear miſcarriage. The offer is God's: the acceptance and uſe of it is their own: and in this ſenſe, and this only may they be ſaid to be predeſtinated to life.

This is the full ſcope and deſign of the apoſtle in this noted chapter, which hath been ſo often called in to authoriſe the doctrine of abſolute predeſtination to eternal life, or reprobation to eternal miſery, without any conſideration of perſonal merit or demerit in men. And this is all that is meant by thoſe ſtrong expreſſions abovecited.

Accordingly our church, which loves to keep as near as poſſible to ſcripture language, and conſequently may ſometimes have been miſunderſtood upon that account, where it hath adopted

dopted ſcripture expreſſions, and ſcripture itſelf hath been miſrepreſented, our church, I ſay, ſhews, upon the whole, this to be her meaning, in her [a] article concerning predeſtination; where ſhe mentions at the latter end of it, who they are, to whom this doctrine can be of any comfort, that is, "only to godly perſons." And ſhe juſt before defines, who they are, whom ſhe thus ſtiles *godly perſons:* they are ſuch as "through grace *obey* the calling," which is a ſpontaneous act; "they walk religiouſly in good "works." She ſuppoſeth indeed, as the ſcripture doth, that God *may*, and *will* grant greater meaſures of light and grace to *ſome*, than he vouchſafes to *others*, to conduct them in their way to happineſs, according as he hath ordained in the purpoſes of his own will. By which will he hath created different orders of beings, capable of greater or leſs enjoyments; by which will he hath created angels, as well as men: by which will he hath called ſome men into the glorious advantages of goſpel light, whilſt others are left in a ſtate of heathen ignorance.

But then ſhe doth not ſay, that he hath denied *ſufficient* means of grace to any, who will make a proper uſe of them: ſhe doth not ſay, or ſuppoſe, that he hath abſolutely predeſtinated

[a] Art. 17.

any

any neceſſarily to eternal miſery: but only ſays, "that for curious and carnal men," i. e. for men of vain curioſity, and carnal wicked lives, "to "have continually the ſentence of God's predeſ- "tination before their eyes," to dwell upon ſuch ſubjects in their thoughts and imaginations, is an occaſion, or inſtrument, which the devil makes uſe of for their deſtruction, by thruſting them into deſpair. "It is, ſaith the article, a "moſt dangerous downfal, or precipice, where- "by the devil doth thruſt them into deſperation, "or into wretchleſſneſs of moſt unclean living, "no leſs perilous than deſperation." You ſee, according to the article, it is not God, or his decree, which thruſts them; but the devil's ſuggeſtions, heightened by their own deſpondent, guilty imaginations. That is, their own fears, ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of their wicked lives, wrong imbibed prejudices about the oeconomy of divine juſtice, a fond curioſity of prying into divine counſels, or a vanity of pretending to know ſomething of divine intentions, inflammatory conceit, for a time, and pride of their own ſpiritual excellence and ſecurity, afterwards melancholy reflexions upon what they judge to be the fated lot of ſome men, and at length of themſelves, theſe, and ſuch-like ſentiments frequently ſuggeſted by their ſpiritual tempter,

and

and much indulged in their own depraved fancies, drive them into deſpair; ſo that they either languiſh away the future part of their lives upon earth in a deſponding condition, doing nothing to the purpoſe in religion; or elſe grow wretchedly deſperate in wickedneſs. It does not ſay, but that theſe men *might* have prevented, or corrected this curioſity in themſelves, and thereby have avoided this rock of deſpair: they *might* have been leſs carnal, and conſequently leſs reaſonably fearful about their ſalvation.

The article therefore, inſtead of giving any countenance to the doctrine of abſolute predeſtination to miſery, rather condemns the curioſity of thoſe, who are fond of prying into the counſels of the all-wiſe, and ſhews them the evil conſequence of ſuch inquiries; that inſtead of doing any real good to them, or inducing them to amend their lives, it only plunges them into deſpair, and a more abandoned ſtate of wretched wickedneſs.

The article indeed in it's general ſtile charitably ſuppoſes, as St. Paul does, when he indites to his converts in general, though he knew ſome individuals among them to be ſtill carnal, and unworthy of their high eſtimation, it ſuppoſes, I ſay, that they, to whom extraordinary means of grace have been vouchſafed, will in general, though

though not univerſally, and neceſſarily, make a proper uſe of them, not indeed by conſtraint, but by prudent and diſcreet choice. "Being endued with ſo excellent a gift of God," it is ſaid, "they through grace obey the calling, they "walk religiouſly in good works:" which are in themſelves deſcriptions of voluntary acts: for a *forced* conformity is not properly obedience, but compulſion; and to walk religiouſly by an abſolute conſtraint, or by election, or predeſtination, is not properly religion, but impulſe. The planets might as well deſerve a reward for conſtantly perſevering in their proper orbits, as man expect it for ſuch a courſe of obedience. But it is upon terms of a voluntary performance, and a rational, religious ſervice, that chriſtians may expect at length to attain everlaſting life.

Life indeed, much more an eternal life of happineſs is the free gift of God to any of his creatures; and known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. The counſels of his will are from everlaſting to everlaſting: but ſtill he hath made none of his creatures abſolutely to be miſerable without their own fault. The article indeed ſpeaks of ſome, whom he may have purpoſed "to deliver from curſe and damnation;" i. e. from the curſe and ſentence of condemnation entailed upon

mankind by the law of works, and original tranſgreſſion; to deliver by baptiſm from the natural ſtate of ſin, and ſubjection to wrath, thoſe, "whom he hath choſen in Chriſt;" i. e. whom he hath invited into the chriſtian covenant, to waſh them in the laver of regeneration from the original ſtain upon their nature, as being deſcended from a race of polluted, diſobedient creatures; and thereby hath begotten them again into a better ſtate, than they were in by nature, with a purpoſe to bring them by Chriſt to everlaſting ſalvation, as *veſſels made unto honour*. But ſtill we know the conditions upon which he hath purpoſed to bring them thither, which are, according to our article, "that they "obey his calling, and walk religiouſly in good "works." It is not, by this article, a fatal neceſſity, but a voluntary cooperation with his purpoſes, and grace, which is to bring them thither. And he hath made no veſſels abſolutely and neceſſarily predetermined to diſhonour in another life, without their own fault in this. Honoured, or diſhonoured, as the veſſel may be in this life, it can be it's own moral character alone, which it ſhall carry with it, that can fix it for honour, or diſgrace in the next.

St. Paul himſelf ſpeaks with as much confident aſſurance of the happy ſtate of his conver-

as any article of our church can do of the *predeſtinated*, or *elect:* as I obſerved in my morning's diſcourſe: *I am perſuaded*, ſaith he, *that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor heigth, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* This perſuaſion in general he was willing charitably and affectionately to entertain of them, as of himſelf. Yet he admoniſhes theſe very converts within a ſhort ſpace after, [a] *not to be* HIGH-MINDED, *but* FEAR; *for if God ſpared not the* NATURAL *branches:* i. e. the Jews, who were born by natural deſcent children of covenant with him; *take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not* THEE, who art of Gentile birth, and as it were engrafted into covenant, in the room of thoſe branches, the Jews that were cut off. And of himſelf he writeth, though he was [b] *called to be an apoſtle*, according to the will of God, [c] *ſeparated even from his mother's womb* to this holy office, and afterwards called by his grace, having certainly had as great a ſhare of the divine aid, or proofs of election, as have been given to any man, yet of himſelf he ſaith, that by godly

a Rom. 11. 20, 21. b Rom. 1. 1. c Gal. 1. 15.

diſcipline he endeavoured to [a] *keep under his bo-dy, and bring it into ſubjection, leſt that by any means, when* he *had preached to others*, he himſelf *ſhould be a caſt-away*.

Thus it is alſo, as St. Peter ſpeaketh, [b] that *we* likewiſe are to *uſe* ALL DILIGENCE, *to make our* CALLING *and* ELECTION *ſure*. And in this ſenſe our church, at the concluſion of her article concerning predeſtination, ſaith, for the direction of good men, that "we muſt receive God's pro-"miſes in ſuch wiſe, as they be generally ſet "forth to us in holy ſcripture:" and for the general conduct of *all* chriſtians whatever, that "in our doings that will of God is to be fol-"lowed, which we have expreſly declared to us "in the word of God." Hence ſhe manifeſtly ſuppoſeth, that ſome voluntary conformity is required, ſomething is to be done, and that done after a certain manner, even by thoſe whom ſhe hath included under the happy denomination of "God's choſen in Chriſt," in order to confirm their happineſs; and that, agreeably to what the apoſtle hath taught us, there is no other way to ſecure an eternal inheritance with *the ſaints in light*, but by conformity in practice, as well as faith to the divine will. *And this*, ſaith an ap-

a 1 Cor. 9. 27. b 2 Pet. 1. 10.

tle, [a] *is the will of God* concerning us, *even our ſanctification.*

Thus will the article of our church, when taken upon the whole together, be found concordant with the doctrine of St. Paul; and the doctrine of St. Paul with that of Chriſt in his goſpel, notwithſtanding our noble author's cenſure, [b] that St. Paul differed from his maſter in this point. They will, I ſay, taken upon the whole together, ſpeak the ſame ſentiments. For it would be very unfair to interpret a whole page, or chapter, or ſection, by a ſingle, detached ſentence in that page, or chapter, or ſection: or to judge of a whole chapter by an obſcure ſentence in it; when it would be more juſt and rational to unravel and interpret the obſcure ſentence by the tenor of the whole chapter, or epiſtle. Treat an article of religion at leaſt as fairly, as you would a chapter or ſection in any other ſenſible, rational book. Compare this with other articles. Abſolute predeſtination and good works are incompatible doctrines. For there can be no moral goodneſs in what is forced, and conſequently unavoidable. There can be no preſcription of moral rules to predeſtinated creatures: or at leaſt they would be uſeleſs. For as much as theſe creatures would be abſo-

a 1 Theſſ. 4. 3. b Bol. Eſſ. Vol. 3. p. 174. 8vo Ed.

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lutely determined beforehand as mere inſtruments, or mere engines of motion, either to *obey* them, or *not* to obey them, whether formally preſcribed or not; and then pray, where would be the uſe of the injunction?

Our church therefore, when ſhe requires our aſſent to theſe articles, either *doth* hold the doctrine of abſolute predeſtination, or ſhe doth *not*, but on the contrary doth ſuppoſe men capable of conforming voluntarily to the articles of religion. If ſhe doth hold the doctrine of predeſtination, ſhe might as well ſpare all the reſt of her articles; foraſmuch as it would not be in any man's own power, either to grant, or withhold his aſſent, but in the power of the predeſtinating director. And if ſhe *doth* ſuppoſe men at liberty to conſent, or not, to theſe articles, which can only make them propoſals of any ſenſe to intelligent rational creatures, then ſhe cannot underſtand the doctrine of predeſtination in the way, in which ſome would interpret it.

But compare this article of our church with her homilies: which are full of exhortations to moral virtue and good works. Theſe exhortations would be abſurd and uſeleſs to *predeſtinated* perſons: that is, to creatures, who have no command over their actions, and are no longer free-agents. Laws might as well be enacted

enacted for beings governed by inſtinct. In ſhort, every exhortation ſuppoſes freedom of action: i. e. a freedom of exerting, or withholding exerciſe of power, in the being, which is exhorted.

The truth of the caſe then is this, which may ſerve,

Thirdly and *laſtly* for a reflexion to introduce a religious inference from what hath been ſaid upon the whole in theſe two diſcourſes. The ſupream Being, who hath placed men here in a ſtate of trial, hath granted to all men ſufficient means of happineſs, or elſe he could not puniſh any with miſery. He may have admitted ſome out of the whole race of mankind, as he hath done even among chriſtians, to greater advantages of light and grace than others. As he hath vouchſafed a greater ſhare to proteſtants in general, than to the private members of the church of Rome. And even among proteſtants, ſome are bleſſed with privileges of greater natural talents and abilities, than others, with the benefits of a better, and more pious education, ſuch as thoſe of this place are particularly called to, and conſpicuouſly enjoy; with the conſequent advantages of more refined, good and virtuous ſentiments, whether ſuggeſted by the internal dictates of his ſpirit, or the intimations of

their

their own natural reaſon, or the injunctions of holy writ, or the converſation of well-choſen companions; bleſſed with more frequent opportunities of doing good, under the ſeveral occurrences of the natural and moral world about them. So, as hath been obſerved, he hath called chriſtians in general, into a *covenant* of happineſs; who are therefore in the ſtrength of eaſtern ſcripture-language, ſtiled by the apoſtle the *elect*, *predeſtinated*, or fore-ordained to enjoy theſe privileges. But in the great day of accounts, God will deal impartially with all his creatures, and judge them according to the light and benefits, to which they have been admitted, and the uſe they have made of thoſe benefits. Good chriſtians therefore may rejoice in the hopes they have obtained, but are not to preſume: bad chriſtians may be juſtly terrified at their condition, but are not to deſpair.

It muſt be matter indeed of great ſatisfaction to the ſincere and good believer to conſider, that ſo long as he continues to obey the moral, and religious precepts of the goſpel, he continues to be of the number of God's favourite people, and that if he ſhould now die in this ſtate, he has well-grounded hopes, that notwithſtanding his many human infirmities, yet a merciful redeemer *will receive his ſpirit*. So likewiſe

likewiſe muſt the conſcience of the ſinner frequently ſting him with remorſe, and many uneaſy reflexions, from an inward ſenſe and conſciouſneſs imprinted, that of whatever congregation he may be, whilſt he perſiſts in a wicked life, he is not in the number of thoſe, who are in God's favour: but let him not from thence imagine, that he is by any decree abſolutely precluded from ever becoming of that number. Let him tremble at his preſent condition; but then let his terror make him ſo much the more induſtrious, and more earneſt at the throne of grace for divine aid to reſcue himſelf out of it, by amending his conduct for the future. Let him not ſuffer either a vain curioſity, or the prevalence of his own carnal affections, or the deluſions of his ſpiritual adverſaries, or the errors of enthuſiaſtick, enſnaring teachers, to drive him into deſpair, or lift him up into preſumption: but let him immediately ſhake of his ſlavery to vice, let him *awake, and ariſe from the dead*, the death of ſin, and he hath the aſſurance of an apoſtle, that *Chriſt ſhall give him light*.

In this, and this ſenſe only, according to the language of our article, can "the godly conſide-
"ration of predeſtination, and election in Chriſt,
"be full of pleaſant and unſpeakable comfort"

to any; and it can be only ſo "to godly per-"ſons;" that is, to ſuch as can give ſome proof of the divine influences of his grace operating in them, by the general tendency of their diſpoſitions to an holy life, and the regular courſe of their outward actions; ſuch as find in themſelves the powers of reaſon, religion, and good ſenſe ready to controul the ſenſual appetite; or, in the ſtile of our article, "mortifying the works "of the fleſh, and their earthly members, and "lifting up their minds to high and heavenly "things, and confirming their faith of eternal ſal-"vation to be enjoyed through Chriſt." But then let this be the only ground of their confidence. Let them not flatter themſelves with conceited thoughts, and enthuſiaſtick pride of *ſenſible* impulſes of the ſpirit, or any other evidence of their election, which is not founded on ſcripture. For vain man ſtudies to delude himſelf; and where preſumptuous fancy is not ready at hand to flatter his conceptions, fore-boding fear oftentimes ſteps in between to terrify his mind. Hence the tenets and apprehenſions of reprobation, too far indulged, have been a dangerous precipice to deſponding wicked men.

Permit me then to conclude the whole with one obſervation; for ſcripture warrants it: that if we implore the divine grace with a ſincere heart,

heart, and humble faith; if we are ready to receive it with thankfulneſs, and make a proper uſe of it, under a due ſenſe of our own weakneſs, and infirmities, we need not fear, but that the fountains of living water will be daily open to us, and continue to ſtream forth in never-failing currents of benign influence upon thoſe, who truly and ſincerely thirſt after righteouſneſs. For the channels of his favour can be ſtopt, or clogged only by the dregs and groſs impurities of a corrupt life. But then we muſt apply, and wait for the divine favours, under an humble ſubmiſſion to divine inſtitutions, and, according to the meaſure of grace we have received, ſtudy to conform ourſelves to his will, if we deſire finally to obtain his promiſes.

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